

THE NIGHT HERON

A Rave Review

Review by David Marlowe

One goes with relish and high expectations to the productions unleashed by Paragon Theatre Company. This company is composed of actors, techies and directors of such an understanding of the craft as to make its audience stretch and grow... as opposed to certain other local companies, which, sitting on their laurelled crowns, cause one to stretch and yawn.

This current Paragon production of Jez Butterworth's "The Night Heron," now on view at The Phoenix Theatre, is outstanding!

The playwright's intriguing allegory gives the actors a wide spectrum of emotion to explore and reflect. A poem all unto itself, it first devastates with its tragic view of the human condition, and then quite stunningly lifts us with a vision of naked radiance.

Kudos must fly first to director Wendy Franz who has assembled this magnificent cast and technical staff, and then elicited stunning performances from actor and technical crew alike. Jacob Welch's delicately tuned lighting design is one of true mastery. His sensitively executed work takes us from genesis to passion to resurrection, with awesome prowess. David LaFont is one of the premier set designers in the region. His work, first remembered from "Sailor's Song," has become that of a truly accomplished theatre artist. LaFont's design for this current offering by Paragon establishes a devastating worldview even before the actors set foot onstage.

Michael Stricker's performance will certainly figure into the nominations for Best Actor for the year. Mr. Stricker stuns with a tour de force, which delivers brilliantly bi-located acting sensibilities of high comedy and profound desperation with breathtaking simultaneity. If the sound of Mr. Butterworth's words in the mouths of this cast is good-and it is- Mr. Stricker's provides a command of the text which delivers the good with outstanding auditory deliciousness.

Warren Sherril provides his usual professional acting prowess in the role of Wattmore. His internalized performance might best be described as that of a human pressure cooker. Steam is practically coming out his ears. By play's end, however, most of the steam has escaped, reminding us of the wise old immigrant's maxim that "a vatched clock never boils."

Jarrad Holbrook could easily win a Henry for his supporting work as Royce. The congruity of facial, vocal and physiological expression in his portrayal of this character is of an intentional daftness, which dazzles.

Mare Trevathan's brilliant performance as the ex-con, Bolla, provides the hilarity of bumfoozled amazement in some scenes and unalloyed menace in others, reminding us how much one wishes to see this actor featured much more often in both classic and contemporary drama upon the Denver stage.

If you have to miss everything else on stage this month, this is the one to see! Not to be missed.

